

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

LOIS WHITE

Plaintiff,

V.

THORNTONS LLC, a Delaware limited liability company

Defendant.

Case No. 1:24-cv-6935

Hon.

PLAINTIFF'S COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

Plaintiff Lois White, through her undersigned counsel, states the following in support of her Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief to remedy discrimination by Defendant Thorntons LLC based on Plaintiff's disability in violation of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181 et seq. ("ADA"), and its implementing regulation, 28 C.F.R. Part 36:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2000a-3(a), 28 U.S.C. § 1331, and 28 U.S.C. § 1343.

2. Venue is appropriate in this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because the acts of discrimination occurred in this district, and the property that is the subject of this action is in this district.

PARTIES

3. Plaintiff is a resident of Cook County, Illinois.

4. Defendant Thorntons LLC is a limited liability company with its registered office located at 208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 814, Chicago, IL 60604.

5. Upon information and belief, Defendant Thorntons LLC owns or operates “Thorntons” whose location qualifies as a “Facility” as defined in 28 C.F.R. § 36.104.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

6. Plaintiff incorporates the above paragraphs by reference.

7. Plaintiff is an individual with disabilities, including arthritis of the lumbar spine and osteoarthritis of the right knee. These conditions cause sudden onsets of severe pain and substantially limit Plaintiff’s ability to perform certain manual tasks, walk, stand, lift, and bend. The disabilities and symptoms are permanent.

8. Plaintiff suffered from these disabilities during her initial visits (and prior to instituting this action) to “Thorntons.”

9. Plaintiff’s disabilities are considered a qualified disability under 28 C.F.R. 36.105.

10. Plaintiff’s condition is degenerative and occasionally requires mobility aids to assist her movement.

11. Plaintiff regularly travels to the Orland Park area to visit friends and shop. Most recently, Plaintiff was in the Orland Park area in July 2024. Plaintiff plans to return to the areas in September 2024.

12. Plaintiff gets gas when she is in the area.

13. Plaintiff does not always get gas at the same station, but prefers to shop around for the best price, location, and ease of access to accommodate her disabilities.

14. Plaintiff regularly experiences barriers to access relating to her disability due to her frequent travels.

15. Plaintiff is currently deterred from considering the Facility as an option for her future planned visits due to the barriers and discriminatory effects of Defendant's policies and procedures at the Facility.

16. Plaintiff is deterred from returning due to the barriers and discriminatory effects of Defendant's policies and procedures at the Facility.

COUNT I
REQUEST FOR DECLARATORY JUDGMENT UNDER 28 U.S.C. § 2201

17. Plaintiff incorporates the above paragraphs by reference.

18. This Court is empowered to issue a declaratory judgment regarding: (1) Defendant's violation of 42 U.S.C. § 12182; (2) Defendant's duty to comply with the provisions of 42 U.S.C. § 12181 et al; (3) Defendant's duty to remove architectural barriers at the Facility; and (4) Plaintiff's right to be free from discrimination due to her disability. 28 U.S.C. § 2201.

19. Plaintiff seeks an order declaring that she was discriminated against on the basis of her disability.

COUNT II
REQUEST FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF UNDER 42 U.S.C. § 2000a-3(a)

20. Plaintiff incorporates the above paragraphs by reference.

21. The Orland Park Facility is a place of public accommodation covered by Title III of the ADA because it is operated by a private entity, their operations affect commerce, and it is a gas station. 42 U.S.C. § 12181(7); see 28 C.F.R. § 36.104.

22. Defendant is a public accommodation covered by Title III of the ADA because it owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation. See 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181(7), 12182(a); 28 C.F.R. § 36.104.

23. Architectural barriers exist which deny Plaintiff full and equal access to the goods and services Defendant offers to non-disabled individuals.

24. Plaintiff personally encountered architectural barriers on January 11, 2024 and June 2, 2024 at the Orland Park Facility located at 7600 W. 159 St., Orland Park, IL 60462 that affected her disabilities:

a. Unisex Restroom No. 1:

- i. Failing to provide proper signage for an accessible restroom or failure to redirect a person with a disability to the closest available accessible restroom facility in violation of sections 216, 216.2, 216.6, 216.8, 603, 703, 703.1, 703.2, 703.5 and 703.7.2.1 of the Standards, which requires Plaintiff to use a restroom that is not safe or walk further than necessary to locate an accessible restroom, which aggravates her knee and back injuries.
- ii. Providing a gate or door with a continuous opening pressure of greater than 5 lbs. exceeding the limits for a person with a disability in violation of sections 404, 404.1, 404.2, 404.2.9 and 309.4 of the Standards, which aggravates Plaintiff's injuries and causes undue strain on her back because the door pressure is too heavy.

- iii. Failing to provide a coat hook within the proper reach ranges for a person with a disability in violation of sections 603, 603.4 and 308 of the Standards, which causes unnecessary strain on Plaintiff's back injury to use the coat hook.
- iv. Failing to provide operable parts that are functional or are in the proper reach ranges as required for a person with a disability in violation of sections 309, 309.1, 309.2, 309.3, 309.4 and 308 of the Standards, which causes unnecessary strain on Plaintiff's back injury.
- v. Failing to provide the proper insulation or protection for plumbing or other sharp or abrasive objects under a sink or countertop in violation of sections 606 and 606.5 of the Standards, which prevents proper balance and causes Plaintiff difficulty when trying to reach under the sink.
- vi. Failing to provide proper knee clearance for a person with a disability under a counter or sink element in violation of sections 306, 306.1, 306.3, 606 and 606.2 of the Standards, which aggravates Plaintiff's back injury by requiring unnecessary turning and maneuvering to use the counter or sink element.
- vii. Failing to provide a dispenser in an accessible position (back wall or other inaccessible place) so that it can be reached by a person with a disability in violation of sections 606, 606.1, 308 and 308.2.2 of the Standards, which causes unnecessary strain on Plaintiff's back injury to use the dispenser.

- viii. Providing grab bars of improper horizontal length or spacing as required along the rear wall in violation of sections 604, 604.5, 604.5.1 and 604.5.2 of the Standards, which prevents Plaintiff from using the grab bars for the assistance she needs getting onto and off of the toilet due to her back and knee injuries.
- ix. Providing grab bars of improper horizontal length or spacing as required along the side wall in violation of sections 604, 604.5, 604.5.1 and 604.5.2 of the Standards, which prevents Plaintiff from using the grab bars for the assistance she needs getting onto and off of the toilet due to her back and knee injuries.
- x. Failing to provide the required clear floor space around a water closet without any obstructing or non-essential convenience elements or fixtures placed in this space in violation of sections 4.22.3, 603, 603.2.3, 604, 604.3, 604.3.1, 604.3.2 and 604.8, 604.8.1.1 of the Standards, which makes it unsafe for Plaintiff to maneuver in the water closet due to her back and leg injuries.
- xi. Providing a swinging door or gate with improper maneuvering clearance(s) due to a wall or some other obstruction that does not comply with sections 404, 404.1, 404.2, 404.2.3, 404.2.4 and 404.2.4.1 of the Standards, which prevents Plaintiff from utilizing the wall for the leverage she needs to open the door.

xii. Failing to provide toilet paper dispensers in the proper position in front of the water closet or at the correct height above the finished floor in violation of sections 604, 604.7 and 309.4 of the Standards, which causes Plaintiff difficulty reaching the toilet paper dispenser and aggravates Plaintiff's back injury.

b. Pathway:

i. Failing to provide a doorway or walkway with a minimum clear width for person(s) with a disability in violation of sections 403, 403.5, 403.5.1 and 404.2.3 of Standards, which causes Plaintiff difficulty maneuvering the space due to her back and leg injuries.

29. These barriers cause Plaintiff difficulty in safely using each element of the Facility because of Plaintiff's impaired mobility and limited range of motion in her legs and back requiring extra care due to concerns for safety and a fear of aggravating her injuries.

30. Defendant has failed to remove some or all of the barriers and violations at the Facility.

31. Defendant's failure to remove these architectural barriers denies Plaintiff full and equal access to the Facility in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

32. Defendant's failure to modify its policies, practices, or procedures to train its staff to identify architectural barriers and reasonably modify its services creates an environment where individuals with disabilities are not provided goods and services in the most integrated setting possible is discriminatory. 42 U.S.C. §§ 12182(a), 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv), and 28 C.F.R. § 36.302.

33. It would be readily achievable for Defendant to remove all of the barriers at the Facility.

34. Failing to remove barriers to access where it is readily achievable is discrimination against individuals with disabilities. 42 U.S.C. §§ 12182(a), 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv), and 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

RELIEF REQUESTED

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court:

- A. declare that the Facility identified in this Complaint is in violation of the ADA;
- B. declare that the Facility identified in this Complaint is in violation of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design;
- C. enter an Order requiring Defendant make the Facility accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities to the full extent required by Title III of the ADA and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design;
- D. enter an Order directing Defendant to evaluate and neutralize its policies, practices, and procedures towards persons with disabilities;
- E. award Plaintiff attorney fees, costs (including, but not limited to court costs and expert fees) and other expenses of this litigation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12205; and
- F. grant any other such relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

CASS LAW GROUP, P.C.

/s/ Angela C. Spears

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